

Refuting the Argument: The Hadith about Forbidding Walking with One Shoe Is Senseless

by

Bassam Zawadi

Argument:

We read the following hadeeth in Saheeh Bukhari, Vol. 7, Book 72, Hadith 746:

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Messenger said, "None of you should walk, wearing one shoe only; he should either put on both shoes or put on no shoes whatsoever."

What kind of senseless command is this?

Response:

The Prophet (peace be upon him) did indeed issue this instruction. Not all scholars have understood that the Prophet (peace be upon him) **prohibited** people from walking with one shoe; rather, many of them understood the Prophet's (peace be upon him) instruction as being a recommendation due to the practice being disliked.¹

Whether the act is forbidden or disliked, why would the Prophet (peace be upon him) have spoken against this? Some scholars opined that it is because walking in this manner causes discomfort.² Another opinion suggest that it is because it makes the person look shoddy in his appearance (if that is how the society views it) and can open oneself up to ridicule from people.³ Another reason put forth is that shoes are meant to be worn in order to protect our feet

¹ Mulla Ali al-Qaari in his commentary on *Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh* said: وإن النهي ليس للتحريم. Abu 'Umar al-Qurtubi in his commentary on Imam Malik's *Muwatta'* said: نهى أدب لا نهى تحريم. As-San'aani in his *Subul as-Salaam* said: حملة الجمهور على الكراهة

² Shaykh al-'Uthaymeen, in his commentary on *Riyadh us-Saaliheen*, called this manner of walking "oppressive" on the other "shoeless" foot:

لا تتعل إحدى الرجلين وتترك الأخرى لأن هذا فيه جور على الرجل الثانية التي لم تتعل

³ Badr ud-Deen al-'Aini, in his commentary on Saheeh Bukhari, cites al-Khattabi as saying:

نهيه عن المشي في النعل الواحدة لمشقة المشي على مثل هذه الحالة ولعدم الأمن من العثار مع سماجته في الشكل وقبح منظره في العيون إذ كان يتصور ذلك عند الناس بصورة من إحدى رجليه أقصر من الأخرى

from harmful objects on the road, such as thorns.^{4 5} Another opinion is that this is the way that the devil walks.⁶ Another opinion offered is that doing this act is discouraged, for it attracts attention through way of dressing.⁷

In summary, a number of reasonable explanations may be given for the Prophet's (peace be upon him) remarks regarding walking while wearing one shoe. It is wholly unjustified to render it merely as "senseless."

⁴ Ibn Hajar, in his *Fathul Baari*, cites al-Khattabi as saying:

الحكمة في النهي أن النعل شرعت لوقاية الرجل عما يكون في الأرض من شوك أو نحوه ، فإذا انفردت إحدى الرجلين احتاج الماشي أن يتوقى لإحدى رجليه ما لا يتوقى للأخرى

⁵ In my (Bassam Zawadi) personal opinion, I do not find this to be a comprehensive explanation. This is because the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that it would be better to take both shoes off rather than to walk with one of them on. Refer back to the hadeeth in question.

⁶ Mulla Ali al-Qaari, in his commentary on *Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh*, cites Ibn al-'Arabi as saying:

وقال ابن العربي العلة فيه أنها مشية الشيطان

Ibn al-'Arabi's opinion finds support in a narration found in at-Tahawi's *Mushkil al-'Aathaar*, which states that the devil walks with one shoe:

إن الشيطان يمشي في النعل الواحدة .

This narration was declared Saheeh by Shaykh Nasrul-Deen al-Albani in his *Sisila as-Saheeha*, who said:

وهذا إسناد صحيح رجاله كلهم ثقات رجال الشيخين غير الربيع بن سليمان المرادي و هو ثقة .

Al-Albani supported this opinion as being the strongest opinion but was also open to the idea of other reasons behind the Prophet's instruction when he said:

فهو يرجح قولاً واحداً من الأقوال التي قبلت في تحديدها

⁷ Ibn Hajar, in his *Fathul Baari*, cites al-Bayhaqi as saying:

وقال البيهقي : الكراهة فيه للشبهة فتمتد الأبصار لمن ترى ذلك منه . وقد ورد النهي عن الشهرة في اللباس . فكل شيء صير صاحبه شهرة فحقه أن يجتنب